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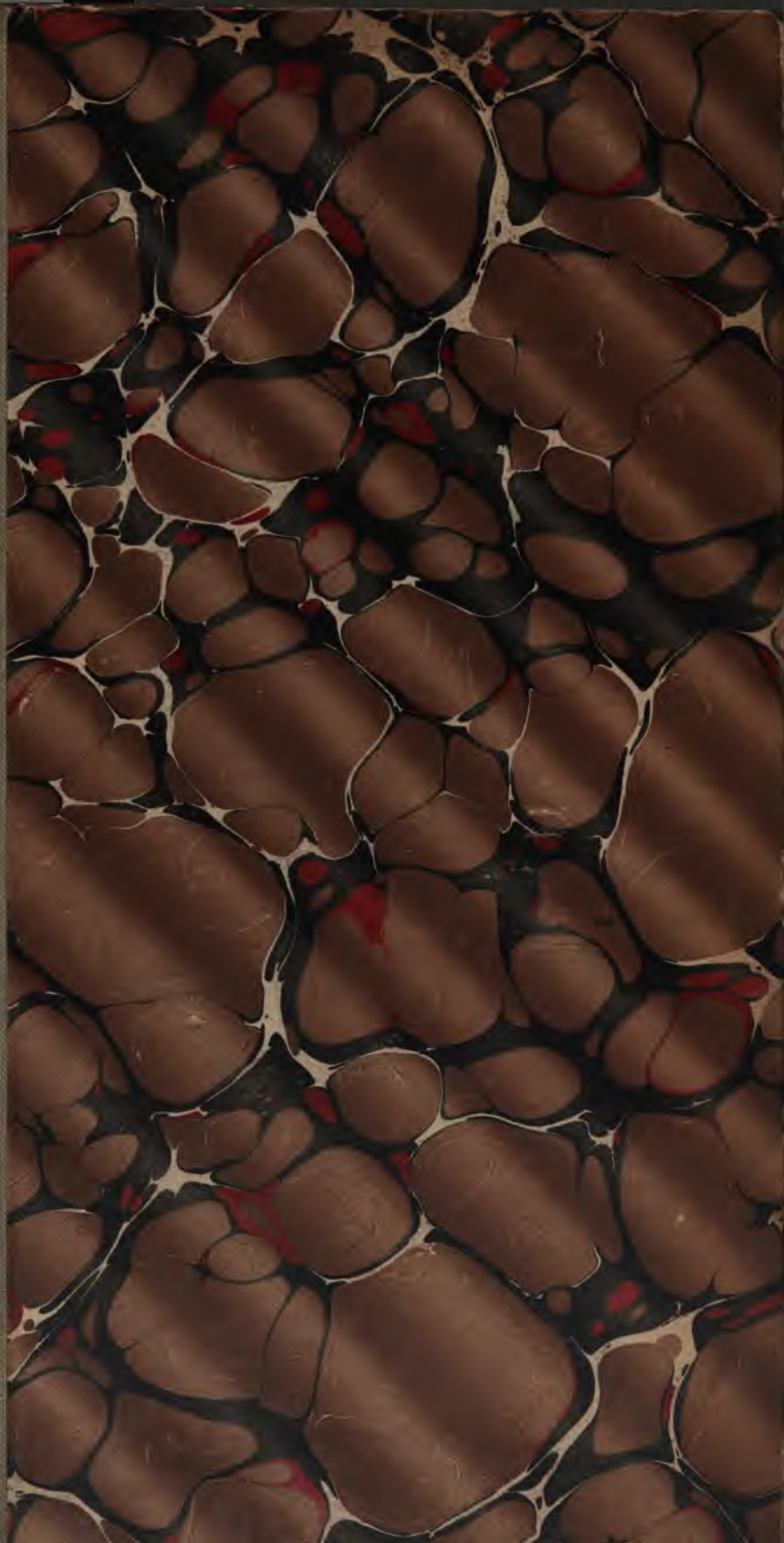
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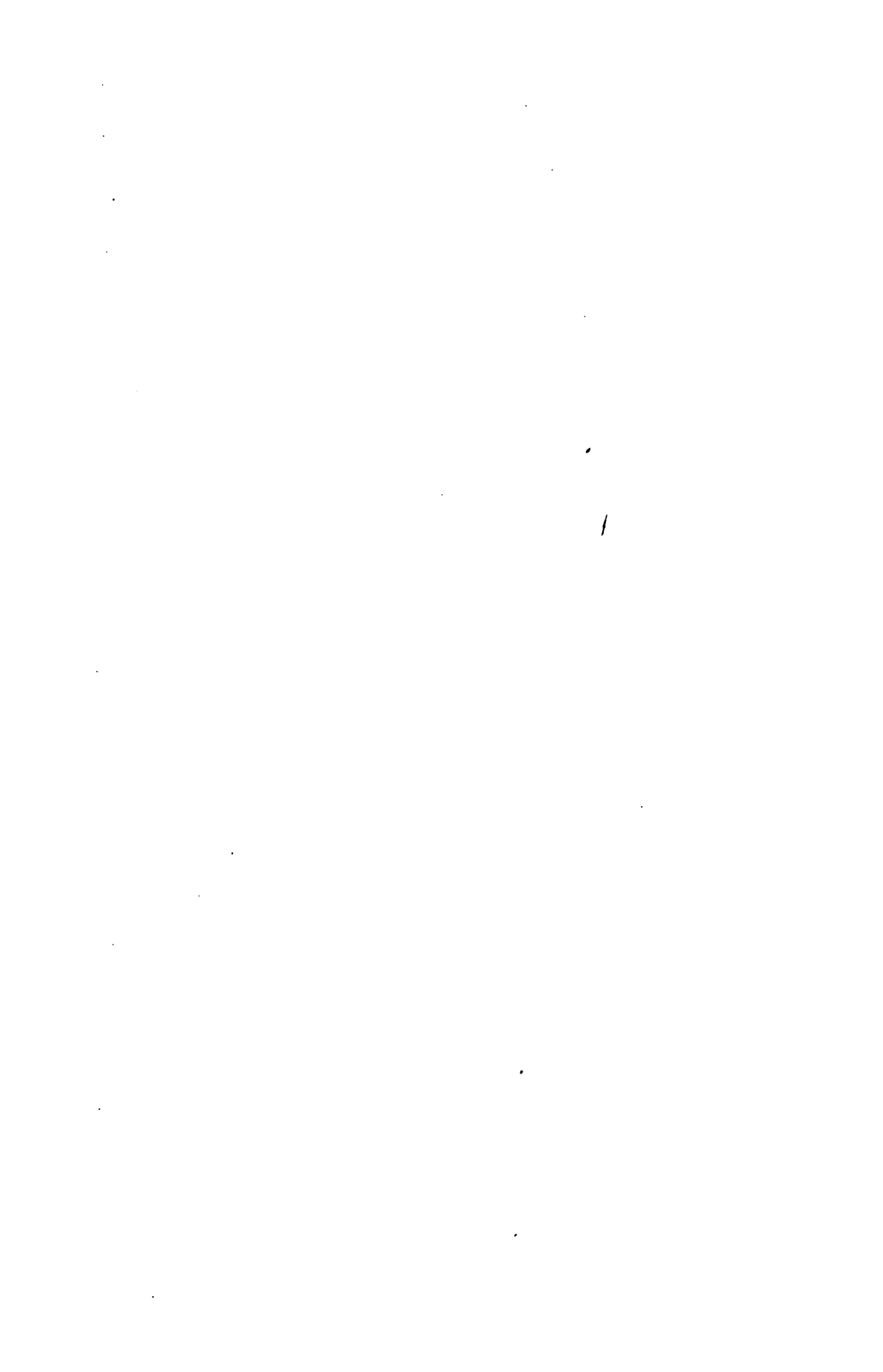


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AN
ADDRESS TO FRIENDS,

PREPARED BY

THE COMMITTEES OF THE YEARLY MEETINGS,

OF

NEW YORK, NEW ENGLAND, BALTIMORE, NORTH
CAROLINA, AND INDIANA,

ASSEMBLED IN CONFERENCE

AT BALTIMORE,

IN THE

Fifth Month, 1851.

NEW YORK:
JAMES ROBERT, PRINTER, 374 NASSAU STREET
[SUCCESSOR TO M. DAY'S WIVES.]

1852.



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ADDRESS.

At a Meeting of the Committees of the Yearly Meetings of Friends of New York, New England, Baltimore, North Carolina, and Indiana, in conference at Baltimore, in the Fifth month, 1851, to consider the present tried state of our Society, and to labor for its restoration to that amity and fellowship that formerly characterized it.

Assembled at this time for an important and solemn service, our minds have been reverently turned to Him, who alone is the sure guide and preserver of his people, that He would be pleased in the riches of his mercy, notwithstanding our unworthiness, to grant unto us a measure of that wisdom which is profitable to direct, and that He would strengthen us, if consistent with His Holy Will, to be instrumental in the promotion of His blessed cause, in the healing of the breaches that have been sorrowfully made in the Church, and in the restoration of that love and unity which are essential to our prosperity, and which were formerly our adorning as a people. We have renewedly and very deeply felt, that it is not for us, in our own strength, to attempt to do anything for the advancement of the cause of Truth. "Except the Lord build the House, they labor in vain that build it—Except the Lord keep the City, the watchman waketh but in vain." In contemplating the origin of our religious Society, we have been instructed in the remembrance of the lives and examples of those who were then called by the adorable Head of the Church into His service. We

behold them engaged with singleness of purpose, advocating the cause of Our Holy Redeemer, and under the immediate guidance of His Spirit, laboring to set forth the doctrines of the Gospel in the purity in which they were delivered to the world by Christ himself, and His inspired Apostles. We see them dedicating themselves to this Holy Work, without regard to the sacrifice of any temporal thing, of personal liberty, or even of life itself—in order that they might be found faithful unto Him who had called them out of darkness into His light, and had separated them for the defence of the Gospel. The Spirituality of this dispensation was clearly opened to them, and while they bore a full and faithful testimony to the unspeakable mercy of God through Christ our Saviour, in that He so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him, should not perish, but have Everlasting Life, they felt and preached the necessity of a practical conformity to the precepts which He graciously promulgated for the government of Men, and were concerned to show forth in Life and Conversation the blessed fruit of the Spirit which is declared to be “Love, Joy, Peace, Long Suffering, Gentleness, Goodness, Faith, Meekness, Temperance.”

This fruit was abundantly manifested amid varied trials and conflicts, and in the sufferings they endured in the support of the testimonies of Truth, they were brought near together in the bonds of the Gospel, and were ready to suffer one for another—in stripes and in imprisonments—so deep and so fervent was the love begotten in their Hearts by the Spirit of Christ.

Very tendering is the contemplation of the love of the brethren, as thus exhibited in those early days, and our spirits have yearned for an experience of the same favored and happy state to which they attained.

As we trace the History of our Religious Society, we find from time to time, that there were defections on the part of individuals, who from a want of abiding in humility, and watching unto prayer were estranged from their brethren, and departed from the simplicity and purity of the Truth as it is in Jesus.

Hence there have arisen schisms and divisions among Friends at different periods in their History, causing sorrow and mourning to the faithful members who were engaged to walk in the Light, and to abide under the direction of the Good Shepherd, whose voice they knew, and who was graciously pleased to lead them in a safe way, and to preserve them from every danger.

As we proceed in this review of our History to a time fresh in the memory of most of us, we are mournfully affected by a contemplation of the effects of a dividing Spirit, which was so fearfully developed, and which led to separations in several of our Yearly Meetings of a most painful and desolating character.

In all these, the cause is plainly to be found in the want of a humble abiding under, and adherence to the teachings of Christ. A neglect of which, led to a departure from the simplicity of the Truth, and in numerous instances to a fearful denial of the Lord that bought us.

There can be no true unity but in a heartfelt belief in the way of Salvation through the means appointed by God in Christ Jesus our Lord. We must know our hearts cemented together by His Love, and having no dependence on ourselves, or in any strength of our own, come to place our trust in Him who died for us on Calvary, and who is set forth to be a propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world. Even in Him who died and rose again, and who ever liveth our Holy Intercessor and Mediator at the right hand of the Father.

"God is Light, and in Him is no darkness at all."

"If we walk in the Light, as He is in the Light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin."

It is the work of the unwearied adversary to scatter and divide, to sow the seeds of jealousy and of discord among brethren. He is characterized as the accuser of the brethren. And when his insinuations are received into the heart, we find ourselves deprived of that badge which distinguishes the followers of Christ. Even of that Love by the possession of which the Apostle declared "We know we have passed from Death unto Life."

We are now brought to contemplate the *present* condition of the Religious Society of which we constitute a part—the preservation of which, on primitive ground, and in its pristine purity, is an object of unspeakable interest to us. It is evident at this time that there is a want of that unity between some of the Yearly Meetings on this Continent which has already produced serious evils and embarrassments, and which threatens consequences that are painful to anticipate.

To remove these difficulties—to restore Love and Unity on substantial grounds, is the object of our deep and earnest solicitude. We desire to speak of things as they exist in plain truthfulness, but in all the tenderness that an earnest concern for the prosperity of the Truth, and the best interests of our beloved Society can inspire.

The fact is well known that within a few years a secession took place in New England Yearly Meeting, at which time a small portion of their Members separated themselves from the body of Friends, and attempted the organization of a Yearly Meeting.

The several Yearly Meetings of Friends both in Europe and America, except those of Philadelphia and Ohio, continued to acknowledge as brethren the Yearly Meeting of New England, manifesting their unity with them by their usual Epistolary Correspondence, and by extending to their Members all the rights and privileges that appertain to the members of the Society of Friends, and refusing to recognize the Seceders.

Philadelphia and Ohio Yearly Meetings (with the exception of the Women's meeting of the latter body) have not pursued this course, but have declined to receive any communication from New England Yearly Meeting, and have suspended their Epistolary Correspondence with it.

They have refused to acknowledge their Ministers, or to recognize that Yearly Meeting in the usual order of our Religious Society. Their subordinate Meetings have in various instances refused to issue, or receive removal tickets, thus abridging the

rights of Membership, and seriously affecting the harmony of the whole body of Friends.

The difficulties arising from this anomalous and unprecedented state of things, in which the provisions of the Discipline of our Society are disregarded—are increasing, and unless removed cannot fail to produce consequences that are fearful to contemplate. It is not for us to enter into a review of the Disciplinary proceedings of New England Yearly Meeting—they belong exclusively to itself, and have not been called in question by the Meetings we represent, nor by those of London and Ireland.

We think it proper however for us to state that we believe that there is a sincere desire with that body to act under the influence of restoring love towards those who have withdrawn from it. And we trust as this feeling prevails, and is received as it is offered to those who have separated themselves from Friends, that with the Divine blessing, many may be again restored to the bosom of Society. We confidently believe that New England Yearly Meeting would not fail to receive, and give due place to any suggestions or counsel that might in right order be offered to them, and should any Yearly Meeting, either through an Epistle or by the appointment of a delegation of Friends, feel drawn to communicate to them any advice that might tend to the prosperity of Truth, we doubt not it would be cordially accepted.

We are comforted in the belief, that the body of Friends represented in this Conference, has, through unbounded mercy, been preserved in the faith of the Gospel in those essential doctrines which were unwaveringly held by our forefathers in religious profession. We see no evidence of any departure among us from the ancient concern of Friends on these subjects, and doubt not all would be united, notwithstanding our many weaknesses, in condemning any departure from that path in which Friends have so long been favored safely to walk.

In this view of the condition of our Society, the position of the two Yearly Meetings to which we have alluded in relation to New England, is cause of deep regret and sorrow—involving

as it does not only a breach of unity between themselves, and that body, but also necessarily in a greater or less degree interrupting the free current of Gospel Love, and loosening the bonds of fellowship between them, and those Yearly Meetings which do unite with New England.

It is too evident that this work is already in progress—feelings of alienation towards brethren heretofore beloved are manifested—distrust and jealousy in too many instances have taken the place of confidence and esteem—and the scattering and separating spirit is seen, where once was the prevalence of unity and concord.

We would, were we permitted to do so, in all the tenderness, yet in the earnestness of true restoring love—not in the spirit of dictation, but of persuasion, appeal to Friends in the two Yearly Meetings alluded to, and entreat them by their interest in the welfare of their own members,—by their regard for the cause of Truth, and the prosperity of our religious Society—by their love of our Holy Redeemer, to put away from them all that separates, and again come into that unity which formerly existed, and is now so seriously interrupted. We believe, nay, we are entirely persuaded, there is nothing now existing in our Society to justify their present position—nothing that should interrupt the ancient practices and friendly relations that formerly existed between all the Yearly Meetings of Friends.

Most earnestly do we desire to plead for the restoration of that brotherly love, which once subsisted, and which is essential to our prosperity as a branch of the Church of Christ.

To this conference it appears entirely evident, that for the accomplishment of what we so ardently desire, the Yearly Meeting of New England, should be recognized by Philadelphia and Ohio Yearly Meetings—the epistolary correspondence between them be again resumed. Ministers travelling in the discharge of their high duties, be received as in former days, and the rights of membership accorded to those, who have not forfeited them in their respective Monthly Meetings, while the decisions of these meetings,

in regard to those who have been disowned from religious fellowship should be respected.

A want of unity with a Yearly Meeting to an extent affecting the common privileges of individual members—while this unity is maintained, and these privileges are accorded to them by the great body of Friends, cannot long exist, and the Society continue one people.

If we could approach our Friends of these Yearly Meetings, we would call their attention, affectionately, but solemnly, to the consequences which we think they must see are impending.

We would entreat them to unite with all the other Yearly Meetings in pursuing that course which has been indicated, and which we believe can alone prevent results, that would be deeply to be deplored. The subject is a momentous one, and it is with the Friends of those two Yearly Meetings to determine whether the consequences which appear inevitable, are to be endured by us all, or whether they shall happily be averted, and we continue as in ancient days, a united people—strengthening and edifying one another—and manifesting to the world an instructive evidence of the spirituality of the Gospel dispensation, and of the practical realities of the religion of Jesus, as professed by our forefathers in the Truth.

We have also been brought into deep sympathy with those, who feel the present state of things to be peculiarly oppressive to them ; who mourn for the desolation of Zion, and yet can see no way in which her waste places can be restored, or the breaches in her walls rebuilt.

To these we would offer the language of encouragement, yet a little longer to abide in patience, trusting in the Lord. We would exhort them to cultivate towards their brethren the Spirit of Love ; and to exercise abundantly that charity that thinketh no evil, and that hopeth all things. The consolations of the Gospel are sufficient for every humble follower of Christ, and as we abide in Him, He will not fail to sustain and to keep us.

In this concern we are engaged for the members of all the Year-

ly Meetings. Let us abide in quiet and in steadfast adherence to our discipline, and the good order of the Church, not seeking to provide by temporary expedients for the removal of any difficulties that may arise under our present afflicted condition.

To our beloved young Friends, we are aware that this is a season of peculiar trial and discouragement, and we would most affectionately call upon these to remember, that the Truth *changeth not*. Forsake not, we beseech you, the straight forward and plain path in which our fathers walked, and be not turned from your allegiance unto Christ by any strife of tongues.

To him we are to render our final account, and blessed be His name. He has graciously promised to those who confess Him before men, that He will confess them before His Father and the Holy Angels.

Leave not we entreat you the safe enclosure. Abide in patience and in Hope. Keep fast hold of the Shield of Faith. Adhere steadfastly to the Truth in its simplicity, and let the works of Christ in your own Hearts have free course. So will your peace abound. "Stand ye in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way and walk therein, and ye shall find rest to your souls."

This Conference has deeply regretted, that the two Yearly Meetings to which we have referred, are not here represented. An invitation was affectionately extended to them, to unite in this measure with all the other Yearly Meetings, under a hope that thereby we might be brought near together, and prove helpful one to another. They are our brethren in a common faith, and in the support of the same testimonies of Truth, and ardently do we desire that the connection existing between us may never be broken; but that we may be enabled in Truth to say, "One is our Master, even Christ, and all we are brethren."

In those Yearly Meetings that appointed us, we cannot doubt that the course they have pursued in accordance with the good order and discipline of the Society in relation to the secession in New England has proved preserving to their own members, and it is

hoped they will solidly consider the present situation of our religious Society, and seeking the direction of best Wisdom, should they apprehend any further duty yet remains for them to perform toward their brethren that they will be faithful in the discharge of it.

We have believed that the following portion of the document prepared by the United Committees of New England, New York, Baltimore, Virginia, North Carolina, Ohio and Indiana Yearly Meetings in 1833, and adopted by those several bodies, may again be profitably spread before our Yearly Meetings, viz :—

“In regard to the setting up and laying down of Yearly Meetings, and what may be necessarily connected with such transactions, we apprehend there is a general assent throughout the Society that some regulations touching these objects are demanded. We have no doubt that it is the prevailing sentiment in the different Yearly Meetings, that the body of the Society should be in some way consulted on such occasions.

If, therefore, it should be found that the subject has so long rested on the minds of Friends, as to have ripened into a conclusion, that no single Yearly Meeting should take a step of so much importance : if Friends are prepared (which we have no doubt is the case,) when a Yearly Meeting is impressed with the belief, that it would be proper for it to be divided, or for its own character as a Yearly Meeting to cease, to communicate their prospect to the other Yearly Meetings, and invite their participation in the concern. We do not apprehend that any injury will arise from our not proposing the *manner* in which that assistance may be afforded.

The several Yearly Meetings so invited, will exercise their own discretion and freedom, whether to participate in the consideration or not—or whether in rendering their fraternal assistance to do it by written communications, or by Committees to meet at the Yearly Meeting concerned, or elsewhere.”

And now, dear Friends, in conclusion, we would commend us all to the Holy keeping of our Heavenly Father.

Let us abide in humility, and in single dependence upon Him,

watching unto prayer. A state of humility, is the only state of safety ; and they that put their trust in the Lord, shall not be confounded.

“For thus saith the High and Lofty One that inhabiteth Eternity, whose name is Holy :—I dwell in the High and Holy Place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the Heart of the contrite ones.”

Signed on behalf and by direction of the Conference,

ELIJAH COFFIN, *Clerk.*

Baltimore, Md., 8th of 5th month, 1851.

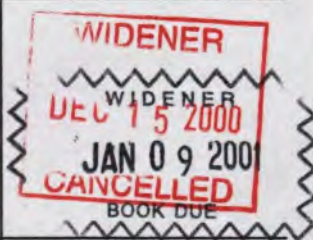


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